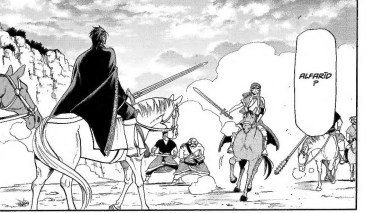


CHAPTER 29: A VILLAGE AT TWILIGHT

I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY!
I SHOULD GIVE YOU A FITTING PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR HUBRIS.
CHARGE!!!!
おお
RAAAH
おお

RUMBLE
YOU'LL BE FIGHTING ME, MASKED MONSTER !!

STING
STING
STING
KEER-CRINGG
THWK
WHIRL
JAB

WHOOSH
...NGH!!
FLIP
...HUP!!
SHING
THUMP
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP

!
YET WHILE YOU HAVE BEEN DOING NOTHING BUT SLIP AWAY FROM MY BLADE, TRAGEDY HAS FALLEN UPON YOUR MEN.
YOU'RE A SLIP-PERY ONE.
HOW DARE YOU KILL MY SUBORDI-NATES.

WHEN YOU ARE...
...BUT MERE BANDITS !!!
NGAAH!!!
WELL, NOW, WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?

!
IS THAT YOU, SILVER MASK?
CLOP CLOP
CLOP CLOP
CLOP CLOP
DID YOU HAVE SUCH TROUBLE MAKING A LIVING IN THE CAPITAL THAT YOU DRIFTED ALL THE WAY TO THESE REMOTE LANDS?
SO WE MEET AGAIN, THIRD-RATE PAINTER.

I HEAR YOU WERE BANISHED FROM COURT FOR INCURRING THE WRATH OF ANDRAGORRS.
YOU'RE WELL-INFORMED.
I WORRIED THAT THE LONGER I SPENT NEAR YOU, THE CLOSER IT WOULD COME TO DESOLATION. WHY, I WAS BESIDE MYSELF.
HM...
I'D BE WILLING TO TELL YOU, WHEN YOU ARE DYING.
WHERE IS ANDRAGORR'S BRAT?
CAN YOU KILL ME?
I CAN TRY, AT THE VERY LEAST.

STAY OUT OF THIS!!

YOU DO NOT EVEN HAVE A SWORD.
IF YOU WISH TO AVENGE YOUR FATHER, YOU MAY HAVE HIM. BUT...
THEN LEND ME YOURS!
HE KILLED MY FATHER.
HIS LIFE IS MINE TO TAKE!

VERY WELL, BUT WHAT CAN YOU GIVE ME AS COLLATERAL?
...

YOU WOULD DEMAND COLLATERAL FROM A BRAVE YOUNG GIRL WHO ONLY WANTS TO AVENGE HER FATHER?!
WELL, WE ARE YET STRANGERS.
IT IS JUST TO BE SAFE.
HOW MISERLY!! NO WOMAN WILL WANT YOU!!
YOU TWO.
ENOUGH OF YOUR FOOLISH BANTER.
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
AAH!
YEEAAR
RIDICU ...
THIRD-RATE PRINTER.
DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT THIS GIRL COULD DEFEAT ME?
I BELIEVE I TRULY HOPE SHE WOULD, IF POSSIBLE.

!!!
TUMBLE
TUMBLE
TUMBLE
GRUMBLE
WHUD
WHUD
DHAM
GEH
HREEN
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP
WEAH
TH-THUMP
WOW
BAM
KISSSH WHUD

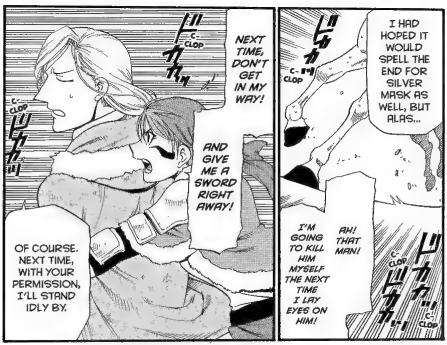
MORE BANDITS FROM THE ZOT CLAN?!
AAAH
FAN-RAM-BUGH !!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!

KH...

DAMN YOU, NARSUS ...!

C-CLOP
ドカガッ
WHILST YOU AND YOUR CLAN FOUGHT SILVER MASK, I CONTRIVED A ROCK SLIDE.
WHAT HAPPENED?!

OH, REALLY.. YOU'RE CLEVER!
I USED A ROCK, A PIECE OF WOOD, AND A LEATHER THONG TO FASHION A *LEVER*. IT MOVED OVER TIME, CREATING A CHAIN OF FALLING ROCKS.


NEXT TIME, DON'T GET IN MY WAY!
AND GIVE ME A SWORD RIGHT AWAY!
OF COURSE. NEXT TIME, WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I'LL STAND IDLY BY.
I HAD HOPED IT WOULD SPELL THE END FOR SILVER MASK AS WELL, BUT ALAS...
AH! THAT MAN!
I'M GOING TO KILL HIM MYSELF THE NEXT TIME I LAY EYES ON HIM!

I'LL KILL HIM WITH A SINGLE STRIKE THROUGH THE HEART..
THAT'S RIGHT ..

I NEED TO REPAY YOU SOME-HOW.
...YOU SAVED MY LIFE TODAY.

HM. THAT'S NOT A BAD DEAL.
YOU COULD LIVE A MERRY LIFE FOR HALF A YEAR OFF OF THAT, COULDN'T YOU?
IF YOU USE A HAMMER TO FLATTEN IT OUT INTO A SHEET, YOU COULD SELL IT FOR ABOUT ONE HUNDRED GOLDEN COINS.
I KNOW/ WHEN I DEFEAT HIM, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT FOUL SILVER MASK OF HIS/
HIS MASK ?

HEY, DO YOU KNOW THAT MAN?
MM. WE'VE CROSSED PATHS BEFORE.
BUT I DO NOT KNOW WHO HE IS BENEATH THE MASK.
YOU FACED OFF AGAINST HIM. DID YOU NOTICE ANY SORT OF CLUES?
BENEATH THE MASK?
HE'S MAD!
IN WHAT WORLD WOULD A KING WEAR A MASK?
...ROYALTY?
WHEN HE KILLED MY FATHER, HE SAID...
"YOU CAN DIE AT THE HANDS OF ROYALTY. CONSIDER IT AN HONOR."
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
...COME TO THINK OF IT, HE SAID SOMETHING HAUGHTY...

HEY, YOU!
HMP?
I'M LISTENING.
HOW FAR ARE WE RIDING?
...IF COUNT ME...
...OR...
...BUT...

I AM SUPPOSED TO RENDEZVOUS WITH MY COMPANIONS IN THE EAST.
DO YOU HAVE ANYWHERE YOU CAN GO? IF I'LL STOP AND LET YOU OFF AS CLOSE AS I CAN.
TELL ME.
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!!

DID YOU SAY SOME-THING?
NO, NO. YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT.
THIS IS MORE THAN I BARGAINED FOR...
IF YOU ABANDON ME HERE AND I'M KILLED BY THAT SILVER MASK, YOU'LL CERTAINLY REGRET IT!
ONCE YOU'VE SAVED SOMEONE, YOU HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSI-BILITY FOR THEM TO THE VERY END!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
NER-SUS.
ALL RIGHT, NIKE-SUS.
I'M AFRAID! GOOD TO TRAVEL WITH YOU!
...YES, IT'S... A PLEA-SURE...
LOOK, NIK-SUS, IS AN LAKE.
SO IT IS. GOOD.

I'D LIKE TO ACQUIRE A SECOND STEED, IF POSSIBLE.
WE NEED TO LET THE HORSE REST.
...?
DO YOU HAVE THE MONEY TO BUY A HORSE?
WHY DO YOU HAVE SO MANY GOLD COINS?
WHY? BECAUSE THEY BELONG TO ME.
THIS LOOKS LIKE ENOUGH FOR A HUNDRED HORSES!
WOW!

WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
HMM. YOU MUST NOT HAVE LIVED A RESPECTABLE LIFE, THEN.
THOUGH YOU LOOK RESPECTABLE.
ALFARID.
THEY'D SAY HE'D STOLEN IT FROM, SOMEWH—
WAY, IF AN AZAT WERE EVER FOUND CARRYING ANY GOLD COINS, OFFICIALS WOULD COME AND TORTURE HIM!
BECAUSE THE WAY OF THE WORLD IS THAT GOLD COINS NEVER COME INTO THE HANDS OF RESPECTABLE PEOPLE.
THEY SHOULD BE PREPARING THEIR SUPPERS AT THIS HOUR, BUT THERE IS NO SMOKE FROM A COOKING FIRE COMING FROM ANY OF THE HOUSES.

IT'S NOT JUST THE SMOKE. THERE'S NOT A SINGLE LIGHT..
..

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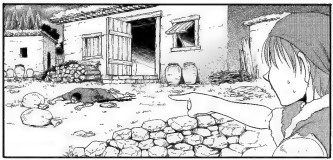
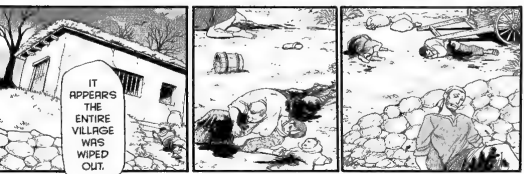


HE'S DEAD ...?

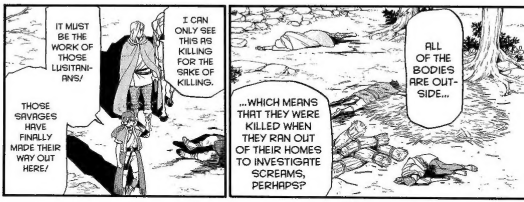
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TAKE HIS PURSE?
WHAT IS IT?

THE ZOT CLAN NEVER STEALS FROM THE DEAD AND THE SICK!!
DON'T SUGGEST SUCH A THING!

...MY MIS-TAKE.


IT APPEARS THE ENTIRE VILLAGE WAS WIPED OUT.

THE THINGS IN THIS DWELLING HAVEN'T BEEN TOUCHED.
IT WASN'T ROBBERY, THEN.
HOW BLOOD-THIRSTY.
THEY KILLED EVERYONE, EVEN THE WOMEN, THE CHILDREN, AND THE ELDERLY.


IT MUST BE THE WORK OF THOSE LUSITANIANS/
THOSE SAVAGES HAVE FINALLY MADE THEIR WAY OUT HERE/
I CAN ONLY SEE THIS AS KILLING FOR THE SAKE OF KILLING.
...WHICH MEANS THAT THEY WERE KILLED WHEN THEY RAN OUT OF THEIR HOMES TO INVESTIGATE SCREAMS, PERHAPS?
ALL OF THE BODIES ARE OUTSIDE...

BEST TO STAY PUT WHEN IT GETS DARK/
THAT'S WHEN THE BANDITS AND SUCH COME OUT—
WE'LL LAY THEM TO REST WHEN THE DAY BREAKS.
FOR TONIGHT, WE SHOULD BORROW A HOUSE TO REST IN.
GOOD IDEA.

SWIRL
WHINNY
BHRR
BAM

TUT..
RIP
... TUT ...

WH...
WHAT IS THAT?!
WAVE

WHINN
SKRRT

HWOO
A HAND, GROWING FROM THE GROUND ...?!

ドク
BADUM
ドク
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